

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested.

Claim 15 was rejected over Buelna U.S. Patent 5,443,449. However, it seems that claim 15 was misinterpreted. Claim 15 recited (and still recites) in the final paragraph thereof that the proximal end of the sealing member is connected (affixed) to the outer body, and the distal end of the sealing member is affixed to the inner body (see the preferred embodiment disclosed in connection with Figs. 6 and 7 wherein the proximal end of the sealing member 60 is affixed to the outer body 52, and the distal end of the sealing member is affixed to the inner body 54). Hence, the sealing member can be collapsed in response to relative axial sliding movement between the inner and outer bodies in one direction (see Fig. 7).

Buelna discloses a sealing member 50, but the sealing member is affixed only to the outer body 27, not to both of the inner and outer bodies (see Buelna, column 5, lines 18-23). Thus, Buelna provides the outer body 27 with longitudinal slit in order to create fingers 43 that carry the sealing member (sleeve) 50 radially outwardly (see Buelna, column 5, lines 31-39). No such structure is needed in the presently claimed invention.

Therefore, it is submitted that claim 15 distinguishes patentably over Buelna for that reason alone. However, claim 15 has been further amended in the first subparagraph thereof by reciting that the entire inner body and the entire outer body are axially slidable relative to one another. In Buelna, the outer body 27 is fixed to the inner tube at the distal section 41 (Buelna, column 4, lines 49-52). That is done in order to ensure that the fingers 43 will expand outwardly when the proximal portion of the outer body is slid relative to the inner body. If the entire outer body of

Buelna were able to slide relative to the inner body, then the fingers could not be expanded outwardly. Accordingly, it is submitted that claim 15 further distinguishes over Buelna for that reason.

The remaining changes to claim 15 have been made to ensure that the claim is broad enough to cover the situation where the sealing member is deformed (i.e., collapsed or expanded) regardless of whether the inner body is slid relative to the outer body or vice versa.

It is also noted that it would not have been obvious from any of the secondary references asserted against claim 16, to have modified Buelna's structure in a manner resulting in the presently claimed structure.

In light of the foregoing, it is submitted that claim 15 distinguishes patentably over Buelna, and that the application is in condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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